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House of Representatives

HONORING OUR NATION'S VETERANS!

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce two pieces of legislation in this House that recognizes and honors the service and sacrifice of members of the United States Armed Forces throughout the history of our great Nation.

The first bill is H.R. 4425, called the Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act. Currently, prisoners of war who die during their imprisonment of wounds inflicted in war are eligible for a posthumous Purple Heart recognition. However, those who die of starvation, for example, or beatings or freezing to death are causes that are not eligible for the Purple Heart.

Can this be right? There should be no false distinction indicating more courage or more sacrifice by some who died and less by others. All POWs who died in service to our Nation should be eligible for this Purple Heart recognition, and H.R. 4425 will allow all members of our armed forces who die while a prisoner of war, regardless of the

cause of death, to be awarded this honor. This will apply to all wars, past and present.

I am indebted to Rick and Brenda Morgan Tavares of Campo, California, and to Wilbert "Shorty" Estabrook of Murrieta, California, who brought this issue to my attention. Shorty survived the Tiger Camp death march during the Korean War and was imprisoned for over 3 years. Brenda's uncle, Corporal Melvin Morgan, died of starvation and beatings he suffered in 1950 at the age of 20 in Korea. Surely Corporal Morgan is deserving of a Purple Heart.

I am also introducing H. Con. Res. 434, a resolution to commend all persons who were inducted for service in the United States Armed Forces during World War II. I repeat, inducted into service. This is a particularly fitting time for such recognition. We all witnessed last Saturday the World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, DC, being dedicated as a lasting symbol of our Nation's appreciation

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of these veterans. We are also approaching the 60th anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2004, when tens of thousands of inductees, or draftees as they are usually called, were among the Allied Forces that invaded Normandy, France.

To provide a bit of history, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 was enacted 1 year after Germany invaded Poland, and the number of men to be inducted into the Armed Forces was increased 5 days after the United States entered World War II in December of 1941. Of the over 16 million uniformed personnel serving during World War II, 10 million were draftees. They distinguished themselves in war and peace, as we know,

and Tom Brokaw has called them "America's Greatest Generation."

The Blinded Veterans Association of San Diego, California, and its President William Montgomery have asked for my help in gaining national recognition for the draftees in our Armed Forces, and I am honored to do so today. H. Con. Res. 434 commends the millions who were inducted during World War II and who served with great courage to advance the cause of freedom throughout this world.

Taken together, these two pieces of legislation remind us of the gift of freedom that we have been given through the service and sacrifice of men and women who came before us. I urge my colleagues to support both H.R. 4425 and H. Con. Res. 434.